



Idaho

Current Developments

June 2003

EQIP facts

Over \$8.6 million have been tentatively allocated to fund 154 contracts in 28 counties through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) statewide application process, according to Bob Bartholomew, assistant state conservationist for programs.

Idaho field offices received over 1,200 EQIP applications totaling over \$35 million. Our funding allocation for fiscal year 2003 was \$13,800,000.

Almost \$3.6 million have been allocated to county and tribal Local Working Groups to fund their highest ranking applications that did not receive funding in the statewide process. This will allow a minimum of at least one EQIP contract in every county or reservation that received a valid EQIP application.

Local Working Groups will use the same selection process used in the statewide process by selecting the

highest scored applications in any resource concern category.

District conservationists are working with the tentatively funded applicants to determine if they qualify as Limited Resource or Beginning Farmers. Producers in those categories may cost-share up to 75 percent on irrigation systems and animal waste facilities, rather than the maximum of 50 percent that has been set statewide.

Remaining EQIP funds are being held for Errors and Omissions in future years (a Congressionally mandated allocation) and for any cost increases during conservation plan development. Near the end of the program year, any excess funds will be allocated to additional applications.

We expect 42 of Idaho's 44 counties to fund EQIP contracts this fiscal year.

New TSP rule is good for conservation districts

NRCS is publishing an amendment to the Technical Service Provider rule that will make it easier for states, local and tribal governments to provide technical assistance to get conservation applied on farms and ranches around the country.

The rule allows for conservation districts to act as TSPs through contribution agreements and cooperative working agreements, using NRCS job approval

authority and under NRCS technical guidance. Districts employees will not have to register separately as a TSP through the NRCS TechReg system.

NRCS will develop memorandums of understanding and contribution agreements with other public agencies to cover the terms and conditions of technical services and staff qualifications.

This amendment will give NRCS more ways to engage qualified experts from the full range of sources to provide efficient and cost-effective conservation assistance to our customers, the farmers and ranchers of America.

Farms accepted for FRPP

NRCS Idaho has accepted four properties in Teton, Bonneville and Fremont Counties for funding under the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, according to Bob Bartholomew, assistant state conservation for programs.

The next step in the process will be to develop a cooperative agreement between the Teton Regional Land Trust and NRCS. About \$879,000 has been approved for use on these projects.

NRCS is part of Ag in the Classroom Workshops

NRCS is among the presenters at Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom workshops for teachers being held in late June and July in Coeur d'Alene, Meridian, Payette, Pocatello, Idaho Falls, and Twin Falls. The two-day workshops include an all-day field trip to a farm or ranch and a day of classroom activities.

Sharon Norris, Public Affairs Specialist, and Wayne Faude, Earth Team Volunteer, Boise State Office, have worked together to develop the content of the NRCS portion of the agenda.

Topics covered include how farmers and ranchers incorporate conservation into agricultural production, the local-state-federal partnership in place to help farmers with conservation, conservation programs, and how and why farmers and ranchers come to NRCS and local soil conservation districts for help.

Faude will participate in each of the workshops to give the NRCS presentation. We are giving teachers a new Soils CD containing lesson plans, soil songs, and other teaching aids., Conservation and the Water Cycle poster and lesson plans, and Idaho adaptation notes for Utah's Secrets in the Soil lesson plans.

Conservation funds available to landowners through SCC

The Idaho Soil Conservation Commission is stepping up efforts to increase awareness about the Commission's grant and loan programs.

"We are encouraging potential new clients to contact their local soil conservation districts and apply for conservation dollars that can translate directly into benefits for them and all Idahoans, said Jerry Reid, SCC chair."

The Resource Conservation and Rangeland Development Program (RCRDP) provides both grants and loans on eligible conservation projects. Long-term, low-interest loans up to \$100,000 can be made to landowners for resource management projects and improvements, including efforts to conserve soil and water resources.

The program also provides financial assistance in the form of monetary grants to improve water quality and soil conservation. Grants may also be awarded for the demonstration of new or innovative conservation improvement practices or systems on rangeland and riparian areas.

A significant portion of the funds available from the Commission uses Idaho Department of Environmental Quality funding.

The State Revolving Fund uses funds to facilitate larger conservation efforts. Eligible projects address non-point source concerns on both private and public lands. The program focuses on projects that attend to public health emergencies or hazards, watershed restoration and watershed protection.

For more information contact David Coburn, Idaho Soil Conservation Commission, at 208-332-8653.

Idaho Current Developments is published by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 9173 W. Barnes Dr., Ste. C, Boise, Idaho 83709, for employees, retirees, and conservation partners.
Richard W. Sims, State Conservationist

Sharon Norris, Editor

Send inquiries, comments, and contributions to sharon.norris@id.usda.gov or call 208-378-5725.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

NACD announces restructuring plan

The NACD Executive Board has approved a comprehensive restructuring plan and revised operating budget for the national association that became effective June 1, 2003. The plan realigns and redirects budget and staff resources to priority areas outlined in the Strategic Plan adopted by the NACD Board of Directors two years ago.

Among the changes, NACD's Service Department in League City will be phased out of operation over an 18-month period. Marginally profitable printing and catalog sales will be discontinued. The Public Affairs Office will be eliminated and mission critical functions will be outsourced (Stewardship, annual meeting, awards, etc.). The physical plant and adjoining land will be either leased or sold.

The accounting department will be downsized and relocated to Washington, D.C.

NACD's Leadership Service unit is being eliminated and regional offices will be closed on or before Dec. 31, 2003. Unless supported with outside funding, standing policy committees will not operate.

A new Resource Development Office will be established to help secure sponsor support and funding for priority programs and services. In addition, NACD will seek to establish a center to deliver capacity building services, funded through grants, agreements and fee for service revenue.

The Executive Board believes these actions will best position the association to meet current and emerging challenges and opportunities and refocus energies on the top priority needs of its members—conservation districts.

To view a copy of the plan, go to <http://nacdn.net/org/special/ahead/>

Soil quality tested on Bonneville County farm

Soil scientists from the National Soil Survey Center, Lincoln, Nebraska, visited the farm of Gordon Gallup, Idaho Falls, in late May to study the effect that no till has on soil quality.

Idaho soil scientists participating included Dave Hoover, Hal Swenson, Rod Kyar, Brad Duncan, Glenn Hoffman and Tony Robertson.

Gallup is a supervisor on the East Side SWCD Board and President of the Idaho Grain Grower's Association.

The study is a joint project of NRCS, Agricultural Research Service, and Ohio State University. It involves no till farmers in Virginia, Ohio, Nebraska, Kansas and Idaho.

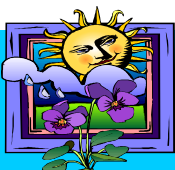
Gordon, who has been using no till for about 16 years, has seen major changes in his soils and erosion levels. Soil carbon levels have gone from 1.25 in 1985 to a range of 2.65 to 3.25 at present.

During the study, soil scientists completed soil characterization at three sites on Gallup's farm. The sites consisted of reduced tillage, no till, and native range on the same soil type so differences in soil quality and soil properties could be compared. The data will be used to verify improvement of soil quality and soil properties based on management practices.

"Based on soil pit descriptions and field studies, the no till fields had significantly more organic carbon and better water infiltration than adjacent fields that are conventionally tilled," said Hoover, state soil scientist.

Soil quality can't be measured directly so indicators are used to measure trends in soil function. Indicators can be physical, chemical, and biological. Gordon's no till operation has shown increases in soil organic matter, improved soil structure, increases in available water holding capacity, and storage of soil carbon.

Dave Hoover, Boise State Office, and Brad Duncan, Idaho Falls, contributed to this article.



That beautiful season the summer! Filled was the air with a dreamy and magical light; and the landscape lay as if new, created in all the freshness of childhood.

--Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

RC&D helps pave the way for new walking trail

by Russ Manwaring, RC&D Coordinator, Emmett

Seven years after the NRCS RC&D program funded a greenway plan in Payette, a significant portion of the trail is constructed. The West Central Highlands RC&D funded the plan study for the City in 1996. It was later used as a guidance tool to put together land easements and other agreements for the walking trail along the Payette and Snake Rivers.

In 2002, the RC&D was instrumental in obtaining a special Congressional Appropriation of \$105,000 to start the trail. The paved trail, .75 mile in length, was completed and dedicated in Nov. 2002 in a ceremony

attended by Senator Larry Craig and Governor Dick Kempthorne.

A joint project by the City and Payette County, the trail features a paved parking lot and access road, a trail along the west side of a fishing pond, and an ADA accessible fishing pier. The greenway easement required some streambank stabilization work, with four river barbs installed to protect the bank. The city engineer used NRCS guidance documents to design the river barbs. Willow slips will be planted as soon as high water recedes.

The trail continues on for another mile in a “natural setting” along the Snake River to Centennial Park. Project work continues to install short trail bridges over wetlands and small drainage channels.

Checklist for maintaining windbreaks

by Loren St. John, Aberdeen Plant Materials Center

We all are aware that once a windbreak is planted, some important maintenance items that must be performed. The following checklist may help your field office customers enhance the function and value of their windbreaks.

- Control weeds to reduce plant stress, improve windbreak growth rates, and reduce susceptibility to insect and disease damage.
- Replace dead trees and shrubs during the first three years. Gaps reduce the effectiveness of the windbreak and can also be an eyesore.
- Ensure that the irrigation system is operating properly during each growing season. Check for trees or shrubs that are getting too much or too little water.

- Inspect the windbreak often during the growing season to spot any insect or disease damage that may be taking place. Catch problems early and implement control measures.
- Inspect windbreak frequently for signs of animal damage. Find problems early and initiate control measures.
- Pruning windbreaks is discouraged unless the health of the windbreak is at risk or safety is a factor. If pruning is necessary, use proper equipment and pruning techniques.
- If weed barrier fabric was installed on the windbreak, make sure that fabric isn't damaging trees and shrubs by rubbing or girdling the trunk or stem. The slit in the fabric may need to be enlarged as trees and shrubs grow larger.

Plant Materials Technical Note No. 43, Tree Planting Care and Management, provides guidance for establishing and managing woody plantings. Be sure to review it for specific maintenance pointers.



Summer afternoon, summer afternoon.
To me those have always been the two most
beautiful words in the English language.

--Henry James

News Briefs

Idaho tree selected for 2003 Capitol Holiday Tree

A spruce tree on the Boise National Forest has been selected as the nation's Capitol Holiday Tree. This is the first time in the 40-year tradition that the tree will come from the state of Idaho. Because of the need to be sensitive about security, the Forest Service will not reveal the specific location of the tree at this time.

Group headed by Wood receives Honor Award

Former Idaho NRCSer Jim Wood and a group of 17 employees from throughout the country were among the USDA employees honored this month at the 57th Annual USDA Honor Awards Ceremony in Washington, D.C. The group was honored for their outstanding performance in the design, development, and delivery of the "Nutrient and Pest Management Considerations in Conservation Planning" training program for agricultural non-point source pollution reduction.

Salmon project receives national recognition

The Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Project received the Conservation Project of the Year award at the 68th National Resources Conference, sponsored and administered annually by the Wildlife Management Institute.

Katie Slavin, State Soil Conservation Commission, and Jude Trapani, Bureau of Land Management, traveled to the conference to receive the award from Kathleen Clark, Director, BLM, and Dale Bosworth, Chief of the Forest Service.

Slavin has served with the project as office coordinator since 1993. Trapani has been involved on the Advisory Committee and Technical Team. He was also project coordinator from 1997-1998.

The Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Project was established in 1992 as part of the Northwest Power Planning Council's strategy for rebuilding salmon runs in the Columbia River Basin. The Governor assigned the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission as the lead agency.

Idahoan receives regional volunteer award

Congratulations to David Zwerneman, Clearwater RC&D Area Council, Moscow, who is the recipient of the 2002 Earth Team Individual Volunteer Award for the West Region. During fiscal year 2002, Zwerneman officially logged over 211 Earth Team volunteer hours on behalf of the Clearwater RC&D Council's Fire Project Steering Committee. With his help, the RC&D Council received over \$525,000 in funding for National Fire Plan related projects and to purchase badly needed equipment for fighting rural, non-structural fires.

Dan Pierce, RC&D Coordinator, Moscow, submitted the nomination.

Southwest Idaho RC&D hosts free fishing day

Bill Moore, RC&D Coordinator, Meridian, and the Southwest Idaho RC&D Council coordinated a Free Fishing Clinic at Park Center Pond in Boise on June 7. Moore said of the 584 participants registered, 325 were 14 years old or less and 259 were 15 years old and older.

The event, Moore says, just keeps getting bigger and bigger each year.

Grant funds and donations from several local businesses and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game provided lunch and door prizes. Other partners included KTVB-TV Channel 7, Boise Valley Fly Fishermen, and several city, county and federal agencies.

NRCS pioneer Judy Schoonover retires

by Sharon Norris, Public Affairs Specialist

JRCS pioneer Judy Schoonover retired from the Natural Resources Conservation Service on June 2, 2003, with 34 years of federal service.

What makes her a pioneer? She opened the door to a nontraditional job for women in the Soil Conservation Service when she became the first woman in the state to hold the position of Human Resources Officer. She is also one of the few women in our agency in Idaho with over 30 years of service.

It's difficult to say goodbye to someone you've worked with on a daily basis for 32 years. Tears filled my eyes when Judy told me that she had set her retirement date. During the span of three decades, we've formed a strong bond and friendship.

During the 26 years that Judy has worked in the human resources section, she has played an important part in the lives of each and every one of us. She's prepared hundreds of vacancy announcements and job descriptions, been involved in hiring hundreds of employees, and launched many of us into our careers **and** retirement. She's listened to our problems, offered solutions, and given sound advice.

Contracting Officer Janis Stanton said, "Judy was like the neighbor who always had the coffeepot on the stove. Except instead of coffee she always had candy. If she knew I was upset about something or stressed out, I would find a piece of candy on my desk, which always made me smile. Then I'd go into her office, get another piece, and talk about whatever was both-

ering me. I always left feeling much better. I'll always associate Judy with comfort and candy."

State Conservationist Rich Sims said when he reported for duty in Idaho on Oct. 4, 1999, he had hundreds of questions going through his mind. One was what type of human resources section he would find.

"I quickly observed it was a very good section," Rich said. "I quickly learned that Judy was very good at her job. Through the next four years I relied heavily on her judgement and counsel. During our many conversations, I discovered her quick wit, sense of humor, and devotion to Idaho NRCS employees. We will miss her presence and personality here at the office."

Career women like Judy are very good at multi-tasking. During the last 34 years she has not only managed a full time job, but got married, raised two children, and been actively involved in her husband's business.

Judy was born and raised right here in Boise. After graduating from Borah High School in 1966, she got her first taste of working for the federal government by taking a summer position with the Internal Revenue Service. After a year of college at Boise State University, she worked for the Bureau of Land Management, Morrison-Knudsen, and Farmers Home Administration (now Rural Development).

She came to the Soil Conservation Service on Dec. 27, 1970, as a GS-4 clerk-stenographer for the State Administrative Officer and Assistant State Administrative Officer in the State Office. When a vacancy occurred in the personnel section in 1977, she ac-

cepted a reassignment to the position of personnel clerk. Dale Collins (now deceased) was personnel specialist at the time.

That reassignment would become a significant milestone in her career. "At the time, I didn't see the total impact this move would one day have on my life," said Judy. "I found I liked personnel work and having direct contact with employees. I liked being able to do things for them."

After Collins transferred out of state, Judy worked with his replacement, Twyla K. Brown (now working in NHQ), who filled the position in 1977. Stan Barker followed Brown as personnel management specialist in 1978.

Ten years later, Barker walked into the office, announced his retirement, and left that same day. Judy, a GS-9 at the time, was left alone to run the personnel section.

"This was a learning and humbling experience," said Judy. "It taught me that I couldn't be everything to everybody, either at work or at home. I also learned that we all need somebody sometime."

For three months, Judy functioned as both the personnel assistant and personnel management specialist until the assistant job was filled. In 1989 she applied for the personnel management specialist vacancy and got the job as a GS-11. A desk audit by Regional Office in 1998 resulted in her promotion to GS-12.

Judy says her proudest accomplishment is sticking it out with NRCS in spite of the administrative convergence threat that hung over the head of every employee on the Administrative Staff for years. "That wasn't an easy time," she said. She also assumed many new responsibilities and workload during the years that Idaho NRCS functioned without a state administrative officer.

"Keeping up with the continual, unending workload for the last 15 years has been my greatest challenge," Judy said. "I have to admit I still can't quite get the

hang of successfully managing multiple priorities."

Judy is proud of the fact that she's been able to touch the lives of so many great NRCS employees and helped get many of them started in their careers.

One of her strengths is the ability to get to the truth of things when talking to employees. "I can get both sides of a story and reason things through," she said.

And what does she know now that she wishes she'd known when she was younger? "How far I can bend the rules without breaking them," she said.

It's all about people when you're a human resources officer, and it's the people factor that has made her career so enjoyable. It will be those same people she'll miss most in retirement.

Judy's plans for the future include finishing the log home she and her husband Gary are building in Garden Valley, spending more time with her grandson and granddaughter, and "having a life." Judy and Gary will eventually sell their home in Boise and move to Garden Valley permanently.

Judy is truly a pioneering woman. Her long tenure with our agency has provided needed continuity to all of our conservation activities and programs for over three decades. She has done her part extremely well in helping us write our conservation signature across the state.

Our best wishes for a long and happy retirement.

Outbreaks of food-borne illness heat up in summer

by Bill Patterson, State Safety Officer

We smolder at 90 degrees, wilt at 100, and collapse at 110. But the bacteria that cause food-borne illness hit their stride right in that toasty temperature range.

"That's why food-borne illness increases during the summer months," says Sandy McCurdy, University of Idaho Extension food safety specialist. "Bacteria are always present in soil, air and water, as well as on people and animals, but they grow fastest between 90 and 110 degrees."

Given the right circumstances-moisture helps, too-harmful bacteria can multiply quickly on food. When

bacterial populations explode, whoever's eating that food can get sick.

Summer activities often provide the perfect conditions for these loathsome organisms: Not only do the ambient air temperatures that prevail at our picnics, barbecues and campfires fuel the organisms' growth, but we've left our protective thermostat-controlled ovens and refrigerators and our hot running water back at the house.

Fortunately, even though conditions may be perfect for food-borne illness, most of us have perfectly good immune systems to counteract the effects. Without healthy immunity, many more of us would burn up the summer highways to the emergency room. But it's still especially important to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold during these bacteria-coddling long days of summer.

Retiree news

Dick Bergantine, retired area engineer, Pocatello, recently sent us a note asking that we change his address. He and his wife Fran have moved to Minnesota to be closer to his folks and their children.

He says he has officially retired after working eight summers for a consulting engineering firm as a project inspector, mostly on airport jobs. "It's time to fish, boat, and golf," he said.

Dick's email address is rsbergan@arvig.net

Departed friends

Jacob Neurauter

The Idaho NRCS family is saddened by the death of Jacob Neurauter, range management student trainee, Grangeville, who died June 15 in a drowning accident on the Salmon River.

This was Jacob's second summer with NRCS. He worked in Driggs from May to Dec. 2002 and was stationed in Grangeville for this summer. He was a student at Texas A&M where he studied range and wildlife management.

He is survived by his parents and a brother. Condolences may be sent to his family: Tom and Theresa Neurauter, 3311 Dobbin Stream Lane, Houston, Texas 77084.

Donations may be made to: The Jacob Neurauter Memorial Fund for Wildlife Programs, c/o Allen Rasmussen, College of Agriculture and Human Sciences, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, Texas 78363.

Mike Thomas

Former SCS employee Mike Thomas died June 16 in Boise following a 20-year battle with crohns disease and a recent attack of cancer.

Mike came to Idaho when he started work as a soil scientist for the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission at St. Anthony. He began work for SCS in 1981 as a soil conservationist at St. Maries. In 1984 he transferred to Donnelly and in 1987 became the district conservationist at Payette. He resigned in Dec. 1989 to work for the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.

Condolences may be sent to his wife Susan at 22160 Rio Vista, Caldwell, Idaho 83605.

Personnel Actions

Career-conditional appointments

Andrew Becker to GS-07 Agricultural Engineer, Emmett, effective 06/01/03. Brought on from the SCEP program upon graduation.

Lisa Hansen to GS-05 Civil Engineer, Moscow, effective 06/15/03. Brought on from the SCEP program upon graduation.

Marika Kearsley to GS-05 Range Conservationist, Burley, effective 06/01/03. Brought on from the SCEP program upon graduation.

Reassignments

Vingh Hoang, Design Engineer, Boise State Office, to GS-12 Civil Engineer, Forest Service Pacific NW Regional Office, Portland, effective 06/28/03.

Clare Prestwich, State Irrigation Engineer, Twin Falls, to GS-13 Irrigation Engineer, Western Climate Center, Portland, effective 06/28/03.

Joshua Sorlie, Soil Scientist, Soda Springs, to GS-11 soil scientist, Bureau of Land Management, Malta, Montana, effective 06/14/03.

Resignations

Corey Lee, GS-04 Hydrologic Technician, expiration of appointment effective 05/31/03.

Verity Lectka, GS-04 Student Trainee Range Management, effective 06/01/03.

Ryan Nolevanko, GS-04 Hydrologic Technician, expiration of appointment effective 06/14/03.

Retirements

Glen Nelson, GS-06 Soil Conservation Technician, Driggs, effective 05/30/03.

Judy Schoonover, GS-12 Human Resources Officer, Boise State Office, effective 06/02/03.

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
9173 W. Barnes Dr. Ste C
Boise ID 83709

Official Business